

Wildland fire management in European countries: legislation and policy instruments

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Abstract

Wildfire legislation and policy measures are developed at the national and regional or sub-national level in the European countries, within the frame of forest policy and other spatial policies (i.e.: civil protection policy, spatial planning policy). European Union can also influence through the Council Regulations on the protection of the Community's forests against fire (ECC n° 3529/86, n° 2158/92, n° 1485/2001 and n° 2152/2003), the Forest Action Plan (COM (2006)302 final) and the Ministerial Conferences on Forest Protection commitments and resolutions. However, the wildland fire management remains a policy competence of the Member States, which is formulated and implemented in the context of National and Regional Forest Programmes.

In this context, the European Project FIRE PARADOX (FP6-018505) aims to set the bases for a new legislation and long term policy measures for wildland fire management in the European Union. The strategic vision is an integrated approach based on the wise use of fire.

This paper will present the first results of the research about the existing EU and national forest legislation and policy instruments with reference to wildland, prescribed and suppression fires. An outline and first assessment of the models of organisation for wildland fire management in the European States will be done, including the following topics:

- How is considered wildland fire management in forest policy;
- If prescribed fire is considered in the policy instruments as a tool for fuel management;
- How preventive and defensive infrastructures are created and maintained; and if among their functions, facilitate the use of suppression fire techniques is considered;
- If there is any public awareness or information campaigns about the wise use of fire;
- And how is developed the professional training in relation with the controlled use of fire.

The assessment will take into account the existing multilevel governance structure. Four different types of countries will be considered: centralized countries (i.e.: Greece); administrative decentralized countries (i.e.: Portugal); political decentralized countries (i.e.: Spain); federal countries (i.e.: Germany). Consequently, the analysis will focus in the national or sub-national level, depending on the degree of decentralization in each country.

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